

Offering Professional Learning Opportunities

Krista Mecham is a WIDA Fellow and language teacher specialist at the Jordan School District in Utah. In her district, she has worked to break down barriers that limit teachers' access to professional learning opportunities focused on family and community engagement. Explore Krista's tips, engage with the example tools, and identify strategies you can use to support family and community engagement in your context.



Krista Mecham

Tips for Organizing and Facilitating Your Own Professional Learning

- **Focus on asset-based mindsets.** Make sure your messaging positions families as partners with valuable linguistic and cultural knowledge, rather than just beneficiaries of school services. Examine your webpage, communications, and collaboration and leadership opportunities through this lens.
- **Co-plan and co-facilitate.** Invite multilingual family and community members to co-plan and co-facilitate professional learning sessions with you. Include quotes, videos, and ideas from families who cannot attend.
- **Recognize the people involved and systemic barriers.** Honor the dedication and resilience that families and educators demonstrate as they navigate barriers to ongoing, responsive family and community engagement. Acknowledge that there are many systems-level policies that may seem hard to address. Express appreciation for efforts made and brainstorm ways to address barriers.
- **Model effective communication and collaboration.** Share ideas for and examples of the use of interpreters and translation tools, visual communication (photos, screenshots, videos, etc.), and jargon-free language. Demonstrate how to foster two-way communication, not just information sharing.
- **Encourage ongoing reflection and professional learning.** Include time for educators to share their success, brainstorm solutions to barriers, and co-create ideas for implementation. Use existing meeting or professional learning time to continue conversations and stay accountable to plans. Offer ideas for community asset mapping and gathering ongoing feedback from families to find out what families already do, value, and want.

Example: A University Course for District Educators

Jordan School District has partnered with Southern Utah University to offer courses for educators across the district. Krista teaches a course on professionalism and family engagement with a focus on supporting multilingual families. This course counts towards teachers' Utah ESL endorsement. Recognizing that family engagement is a critical factor in student success, the course is designed to share culturally and linguistically responsive tools that support educators as they strengthen their partnerships with multilingual families and communities.

Explore the [example tools and resources](#) from the course to use or adapt to your context.